



Tillamook County Board of Commissioners

201 Laurel Avenue, Tillamook, OR 97141

Phone: 503-842-3403

TTY Oregon Relay Service

Mary Faith Bell, Chair
David Yamamoto, Vice-Chair
Erin D. Skaar, Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 24, 2021

Contact: Commissioner Mary Faith Bell

Phone: 503-842-3403

Email: mfbell@co.tillamook.or.us

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The COVID Delta variant is spreading like wildfire among the unvaccinated in our community. In the past two weeks we have had 361 new positive cases in Tillamook County. To put that number into perspective, from March 2020 when the pandemic began to Jan. 1, 2021, Tillamook County had 325 cases total. In the past two weeks we have had more new positive cases than the first 10 months of the pandemic. This exponential increase is due to the COVID Delta variant, which is three times more transmissible than the Alpha variant.

The spread of COVID in Tillamook County has reached a critical phase. From August 18, 2021, to August 23, 2021, we had six new COVID deaths. That is six tragic deaths in six days. We grieve for our friends and neighbors and their families. We are so very sorry for your loss.

For the first 18 months of the pandemic, we had five local deaths due to COVID. In the past week, we more than doubled the number of COVID deaths in Tillamook County, from five to eleven.

The increased number of COVID deaths in Tillamook County has put a strain on our ability to store the bodies of the deceased. Waud's Funeral Home is licensed to hold nine; since late last week, Waud's has been at capacity. Due to increased COVID mortality and the anticipation of additional deaths, we have ordered a refrigerated morgue truck from the state.

As of this morning, Adventist Health-Tillamook, a 25-bed hospital, has 17 patients, seven of whom have COVID. Their ICU has been converted into a COVID unit, and they are in the process of converting beds on the medical/surgery unit to COVID beds. To the extent possible, Adventist Health-Tillamook transfers critically ill individuals to other hospitals such as Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU). However, due to the COVID surge, availability of beds at OHSU and other hospitals is becoming scarce. At the time of this writing, there are 44 available ICU beds in the entire state.

The current COVID surge is predicted to peak September 7, level out, and slowly fall thereafter. In the coming weeks our numbers will continue to go up, and we will likely lose more friends, family members and neighbors to COVID.

What can we do?

If you are not yet [vaccinated](#), please get [vaccinated](#). Eighty-six percent of the newly diagnosed COVID cases are among unvaccinated individuals. Fourteen percent are vaccinated "breakthrough" cases, many of whom caught COVID from unvaccinated individuals. Most individuals who are hospitalized with COVID and those who die from it are unvaccinated.

Wear a mask in public, both indoors and outdoors in groups of people other than family members. Cancel or reschedule in-person meetings, events, and celebrations. Work and gather remotely whenever possible. Maintain 6' distance from other people and wash your hands frequently. We understand that everyone is COVID weary. These are the darkest days of the pandemic so far, and everyone is at risk.